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ABSTRACT

Attitudes toward learning in the United Kingdom were examined by studying 2 populations: a sample of 1,043 adults from 130 sampling points throughout England, Scotland, and Wales and a sample of 4,245 school-age pupils in England and Wales. Both samples were representative from the standpoints of age, sex, geographic location, social class, and work status. Approximately half the adult respondents had participated in some form of learning in the past 12 months. Participation in learning was influenced by age, employment status, level of highest qualification, and social class. Most respondents considered learning a way of improving their quality of life. The adults and young people alike enjoyed learning new things. Most of the learning people actually undertook was related to their current or possible future jobs rather than to their personal interests. Adults did most of their learning at home, work, libraries, and colleges/universities. Adults preferred learning by doing practical things or self-study, whereas most young people preferred learning in groups. Adults preferred learning from print materials. (Sixteen tables are included. Appended are the following: sample profiles, information on statistical reliability, and social class definitions.) (MN)

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Attitudes to Learning '98

MORI State of the Nation Survey: Summary Report

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CAMPAIGN FOR LEARNING

This report presents the findings of two studies conducted, amongst adults and young people, by MORI on behalf of the Campaign for Learning.

This report has been edited by Toby Greany.

A number of individuals and organisations have greatly helped in the development and production of this report, including Felicity Everiss, Janet Rice and Patrick Vaughan (DfEE), Mark Speed, Naomi Kent and Jane Stevens (MORI), Philip Chorley and Gary Oldham (NACETT), Alan Tuckett (NIACE), Maggie Semple (NMEC), Charlie McConnell (Scottish Campaign for Learning), Patten Smith and Sarah Beinart (SCPR), Chris Humphries (TEC National Council) and Naomi Sargant.

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Attitudes to Learning '98

MORI State of the Nation Survey: Summary Report

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Foreword

We are on the edge of an exciting new Learning Age, a time when more and more people will be actively involved in learning of all kinds.

A significant number of us already learn at work, at home or in the community in a variety of different environments. But an equally significant proportion of us are not yet motivated to see learning as important. Or there are factors which make it difficult for us to find the right kind of learning in a location and at a time which suits us.

The Campaign for Learning is trying to help to create a major shift in our attitudes to learning. We want learning to be seen as something which everyone wants. In short, we want to create or rekindle an appetite for learning in everyone so that there is a groundswell of demand for learning.

Market research is essential if we are to understand the complex variety of contemporary society. This latest MORI poll provides useful data for all those interested in creating a learning society.

The Campaign for Learning will be using it to help us target those who have not historically got much out of their learning. They may even have deep-rooted hostility based on bad experiences of learning.

We hope that you find food for thought in this publication and look forward to working with you.

Bill Lucas

Bill Lucas
Chief Executive
Campaign for Learning

Background and aims of the research

In 1996 MORI was commissioned by the Campaign for Learning to conduct a survey among young people and adults which would provide a 'benchmark' measure of individuals' awareness, experiences and attitudes towards learning. This survey is a follow-up to the 1996 study, with the aim of measuring changing attitudes and building on the original poll's findings. It provides the Campaign with information on a range of learning-related issues, including:

- current and future learning;
- why we learn;
- where we learn;
- how we learn; and
- awareness of the Campaign for Learning itself.

The report is structured around these issues. Within each section, where applicable, we distinguish between Learning at work **and** Learning in the community.

Methodology

Adult sample

- The survey involved 1,043 face-to-face interviews with adults aged 16 and over conducted in respondent's own homes.
- Fieldwork was conducted in 130 sampling points throughout England, Scotland and Wales between 20th February and 12th March 1998.
- Quotas were set by age, sex and work status and the sampling frame was stratified to take account of district and social class.
- Data were weighted by sex, age and work status to ensure a nationally representative sample. Full details are given in the appendices.

Young people's sample

- The survey was carried out as part of MORI's national Schools Omnibus survey.
- The survey involved self-completion questionnaires among 4,245 pupils aged between 11 and 16 years old (curriculum years 7 to 11) in England and Wales between 19 January and 13 February 1998.
- A nationally representative sample of 150 middle and secondary state schools, stratified by government standard region, was selected proportional to register size within each region. Each school was randomly allocated one curriculum year from which MORI interviewers selected one class at random.
- Interviewing was carried out through self-completion questionnaires with the whole class in one classroom period. A MORI interviewer was present to explain the survey to

pupils, to reassure them about the confidentiality of the survey, to assist them in completing the questionnaire, and to collect completed questionnaires.

- In total 179 schools participated, giving a response rate of 51% and an average of 24 pupils per class.
- Data were weighted using a cell weight matrix of gender by age and then rim weights for standard region.

Definition of learning

In this years' survey MORI and the Campaign for Learning made the decision to use the Department for Education and Employment's 'National Adult Learning Survey' (NALS, 1998) definition of learning, which is different to the definition used in 1996. The NALS definition (see below) for taught and non-taught learning was judged to be a reliable definition and effective for research purposes. It is our belief that, despite the change in definition, broad comparisons can be drawn between the two surveys.

NALS/DfEE definition

Learning can involve either formal, taught learning or informal, non-taught learning.

Taught learning, for example, includes training sessions at work, driving lessons, evening classes and teaching yourself using distance learning materials.

Non-taught learning, for example, includes studying and developing your skills on your own without being enrolled on a course, learning on the job at work and keeping up to date with your own interests by reading books etc.

Presentation and interpretation of the data

When interpreting the findings it is important to remember that the results are based on a sample of the population, and not on the entire population. Consequently, results are subject to sampling tolerances, and not all differences between sub-groups are therefore significant. A more detailed discussion on sampling tolerances can be found in the Appendix on page 27.

Where percentages do not sum up to 100%, this may be due to computer rounding, the exclusion of don't know/not-stated categories or multiple answers. Throughout the report, an asterisk (*) denotes any value less than one half of a percent but more than nought.

Summary and implications

Current and future learning

- In the past twelve months, approximately a half of respondents have participated in some form of taught learning. Almost three in five have been involved in non-taught learning. In total, 66% of people have been involved in some form of learning in the past 12 months.
- Almost all young people of secondary school age believe they learn something new every day.
- Participation in learning is influenced by age, employment status, level of highest qualification and social class.
- The vast majority of adults would like to take part in some form of learning in the next twelve months. This is an increase on the proportion who expressed a similar desire in 1996[1].
- Although most people would like to take part in taught learning activities in the next twelve months, only half the population believe they will actually do so. However, a majority of people are optimistic that they will take part in non-taught learning activities.
- Adults are more confident about the likelihood of taking part in taught as well as non-taught learning in the next three years. This may be related to the near universal perception that learning will become more important in the next Millennium.

Why we learn

- The vast majority of people feel that learning is personally important, in order to improve the quality of their life and to better themselves.
- Adults and young people say they enjoy learning new things, although girls have more positive attitude towards learning than boys. Adults prefer learning new things to watching television, going to the cinema or playing sport.
- Young people are likely to cite education and job related reasons for learning. However, most adults perceive the benefits of learning in terms of personal development and helping them to achieve what they want out of life, rather than specifically to improve their job prospects or performance at work.
- Despite this, most of the learning that people actually undertake is related to their current or possible future jobs, rather than personal interests. This may be due to the fact that employers and work colleagues are the strongest influences on people's decision to start learning.
- It may also reflect the tremendous importance of learning at work for most people. More than three quarters of people would prefer to work for an employer who supports their training than for one who pays high salaries but provides few opportunities for training.

[1] It is important to note that the question wording was different in 1996.

Where we learn

- Adults selected a relatively small number of environments as the places where they learn most. The four places most commonly identified were: the home, at work, in libraries and at colleges/universities.
- Young people, particularly girls, most frequently mention 'in class at school' as the place they learn most. This is followed by: from TV, at libraries and at home.
- Most working adults say that they would find time to use a work place learning centre or resources room if it would help them to do their job better. A smaller majority feel that there are enough opportunities for them to learn new things in their place of work.
- The proportion of people who feel that employers should support someone who wants to go on a course not directly related to their job has increased since 1996. Encouragingly, there has also been an increase in the proportion who believe their employers actually would be supportive.

How we learn

- Adults prefer to learn by doing practical things or self study and their preferred tools for learning are books and written materials. In contrast, most young people prefer learning in groups.
- A majority of adults believe that they learn by reading books and newspapers and by watching TV (both general and educational/documentary). Most say that they do all these things at least once a week.
- Working adults rate 'trial and error' and 'informal tips from colleagues' almost as highly as 'taught courses' for improving their performance at work.
- Encouragingly, only a small minority of young people find learning at school unenjoyable. Girls are more likely than boys to enjoy school based learning, as are children from black and minority ethnic groups.
- The most common factors which young people identify as making learning difficult are: poor teaching, feeling unhappy (particularly for girls), and having too many other things to think about.
- More people are using IT and they are more positive about technology and learning than in 1996'. They are also more likely to believe that advances in technology are making learning more enjoyable and easier.

Awareness of the Campaign for Learning

- The level of awareness of the Campaign for Learning has only marginally increased since 1996.

Conclusions

Overall, the findings show that young people and adults hold positive views towards learning and that a majority of people are actively learning.

The vast majority of adults would like to take part in learning activities in the future and almost as many think that they are likely to do so in the next three years. Almost everyone is aware that learning will become more important in the next Millennium.

The survey's findings indicate the huge breadth of learning that takes place and also suggest the importance of the home and the workplace as influences on, and sites of, learning.

Despite these encouraging developments, the survey corroborates the Campaign's 1996 poll and the findings of NALS and *The Learning Divide* (NIACE/GALLUP, 1997), in showing that certain life factors strongly influence people's attitudes towards and participation in learning. Older respondents, people from social class DE households, the retired and those with no qualifications are less likely to currently be involved in learning or to express a desire to be involved in the future. They are also less likely to feel that learning is important or enjoyable.

These sections of the population are less likely to be employed. The worry is that, rather than taking up the challenge of the Learning Age, these groups will become increasingly disenchanted by the pace of change around them.

The continuing challenge for the Campaign for Learning is not only to continue to convert positive attitudes into action, but also to work with others to involve those sections of the population for whom learning does not appear to be meaningful or worthwhile. We hope that the survey's findings on the barriers to learning and the factors and messages that can encourage people to learn are helpful in achieving this.

[2] It should be noted that the question wording and possible categories are different in the 1998 survey.

Key findings

Current and future learning

Taught learning

In the past twelve months, 47% of adults have participated in some form of taught learning, usually once (37%), although 27% have been involved in six or more episodes of taught learning.

Taught courses designed to help develop work-related skills are most popular (23%), although significant minorities mention distance learning (16%), courses leading to qualifications (14%) and tuition or instruction in practical skills such as driving (14%).

Most people choose taught courses which are linked to their work. For 52% it is related to their past or current job, while 23% say that the course was linked to possible work in the future.

Involvement in taught learning is particularly high among those who are in work and those in social classes AB. Similarly, adults who are educated to A level or degree standard are more likely to participate in taught learning. Older people are less likely to participate.

Q **Please look at this card and tell me whether you have been involved with any of these forms of learning in the past twelve months.**

	%
Taught courses designed to help you develop skills that you might use in a job	23
Learning which involved working on your own from a package of materials provided by an employer, college, commercial organisation or other training provider	16
Taught courses that were meant to lead to qualifications	14
Courses, instruction or tuition in driving, playing a musical instrument, in art or craft or sport or any practical skills	14
Evening classes	9
Any other taught course, instruction or tuition	9
None of these	53
Base: All	

Non-taught learning

The majority (56%) of people have been involved in some form of non-taught learning in the past year, usually on six or more occasions (35%).

Involvement in non-taught learning follows a similar pattern to taught. Thirty-four per cent of people have spent time keeping up to date with developments related to their job. A similar proportion have deliberately attempted to improve their knowledge or teach themselves skills without taking part in a taught course (31%).

Once again, the learning topic selected is more likely to relate to a past or current job (55%), than personal interests outside work (24%).

Reflecting the same pattern of involvement in taught learning, there is a noticeable variation in participation in non-taught learning according to age, employment status, qualifications and social class. Once again, involvement is particularly high among those who are in work, those in social classes AB, and those educated to A level or degree standard. Older people are less likely to participate.

Q **Please look at this card and tell me whether you have been involved with any of these forms of learning in the past year.**

	%
Time spent keeping up to date with developments in the type of work you do e.g. reading books, manuals or attending seminars	34
Deliberately trying to improve your knowledge about anything or teaching yourself a skill without taking part in a taught course	31
Supervised training while you were actually doing a job	18
Studying for qualifications without taking part in a taught course	4
None of these	44
Base: All	

Young people believe they are continually participating in learning; 92% think learning is something they do every day of their life.

Desire to learn

The vast majority of adults would like to take part in either taught (60%) or non-taught (65%) learning activities in the next twelve months. The proportion of people who expressed a similar desire to participate in some form of learning activity has increased[1] since 1996.

Younger people, those educated to A level or degree standard and those in the higher social classes (ABC1) are most likely to express a desire to take part in some form of learning activity in the next year. Similarly, those in work are particularly likely to want to participate in either taught or non-taught learning. The same is true for those who are currently unemployed, but looking for work.

[1] The question wording differed in 1996.

Q **How much would you like to take part in any taught learning activities in the next twelve months?**

Q **How much would you like to take part in any non-taught learning activities in the next twelve months?**

	Taught	Non-taught
	%	%
A great deal	22	25
A fair amount	38	40
Not very much	21	19
Not at all	17	14
Don't know	2	2

Base: All

Likelihood of learning

Although 60% of adults say they would like to take part in some form of taught learning in the next twelve months, only 49% actually think they will do so. The same proportion (49%) admit that they are not likely to participate in any taught learning activities in the next year .

However, people are more optimistic about taking part in non-taught learning. Roughly the same proportion who express a desire to take part (65%), think that they will actually do so (60%).

When asked whether they are likely to take part in some form of learning in the next three years people are more positive. The majority believe it is likely they will participate in taught (62%) and non-taught (64%) learning activities.

Once again, employment status, age, qualifications and social class are key determinants of the likelihood of learning in the future.

Q **How likely are you to take part in any taught learning activities in the next twelve months?**

Q **How likely are you to take part in any non-taught activities in the next twelve months?**

	Taught	Non-taught
	%	%
Very likely	24	27
Fairly likely	25	33
Not very likely	26	21
Not at all likely	23	17
Don't know	2	3

Base: All

Learning in the next Millennium

The vast majority of adults agree that learning will become more important in the next Millennium (83%), including 52% who agree strongly. The challenge for the Campaign for Learning will be to convert this belief in the importance of learning into participation.

These views are consistent across all the key sub-groups.

Why we learn

The meaning of learning

As in 1996, 'Gaining knowledge' and 'School' are the words or phrases which first come to mind when people are asked to think about 'Learning' (15% in both cases).

When asked whether they associate a list of words and phrases with 'Learning', 'Training' or 'Education', 'Discovering' (70%), 'Finding out more' (67%) and 'Enjoyment' (62%) are most frequently associated with 'Learning'.

As with 'Learning', people spontaneously associate 'Education' with 'School' (24%) and 'Gaining knowledge' (11%). When prompted, people associate 'Education' with 'School' (71%) and 'Studying' (57%). When asked to think about 'Training', adults are most likely to spontaneously mention 'Gaining new skills' (17%). Similarly, when prompted, 72% chose this definition.

Q For each of these words or phrases I read out can you tell me whether you associate it most with a) learning, b) training or c) education?

	Learning	Training	Education	Not stated
	%	%	%	%
Achievement	37	27	34	2
Being taught	31	19	48	3
School	26	3	71	1
Qualifications	12	37	49	2
Gaining new skills	23	72	3	2
Hard work	36	41	18	4
Boring	24	18	31	27
Discovering	70	7	19	3
Enjoyment	62	21	11	6
Computers	30	47	19	4
Exchanging ideas/information with others	54	16	27	3
Finding out more	67	8	21	4
Studying	33	7	57	2
TV/Video	60	9	24	8
Personal growth	52	19	23	5

Base: All

The importance of learning

The vast majority of people think learning is personally important (90%), including 63% who regard it as **very** important. The proportion who say that it is personally **very** important has increased significantly by 8% since 1996[4].

Improving the quality of one's life and attempting to better oneself are the main reasons for valuing learning as personally important. The chance to improve prospects of promotion at work is also cited. Conversely, the main reason given for not valuing learning is that it is not necessary as they know all they need to know.

The older age groups, those from social class DE households and adults with no qualifications are less likely to feel that learning is personally important.

Q Thinking about this definition of learning how important or unimportant is learning to you personally?

	%
Very important	63
Fairly important	27
Neither important nor unimportant	5
Fairly unimportant	3
Very unimportant	1
Don't know	1

Base: All

Enjoyment of learning

The proportion of adults who say they enjoy learning new things remains at the same level; 93% compared to 89% in 1996.

When presented with a list of activities, socialising with friends (58%) and spending time with family (56%) are selected as the things which adults enjoy doing the most. However, 28% mention learning new things, in comparison to 22% who say watching television and 5% going to the cinema.

Those from social class DE households and adults with no qualifications are less likely to regard learning as enjoyable.

The vast majority of young people say they enjoy learning new things (79%). Furthermore, since 1996 there has been an increase in the proportion of young people who most enjoy the personal development aspects of learning - the sense of achievement (35%, up 7 points), gaining new skills (25%, up 3 points) and increasing my knowledge (27%, up 5 points).

However, although only 22% of school pupils think that learning is boring, 52% think that it is hard work. Boys have more negative attitudes towards learning than girls - 54%

[4] It should be noted that the definition of learning has altered (see page 1). Whilst it is not possible to quantify the effect the use of a specific example such as 'driving lessons' may be responsible for the increase.

of boys (cf 49% girls) think learning is hard work and 27% of boys (cf 16% girls) feel it is boring. Girls in single-sex schools have the most positive attitudes.

Young people and learning

	Agree	Disagree
	%	%
I enjoy learning new things	79	4
Learning is hard work	52	14
Learning is boring	22	40

Base: All

Perceived benefits of learning

Adults' perceptions of how learning can be useful to them focuses on personal development, rather than work. Seventeen per cent believe learning could help them achieve what they want out of life, but only 10% regard learning as useful in improving their job prospects.

That said, in 1996, when prompted, people were more likely to say they would like to learn things for personal enjoyment or personal development reasons, and less likely to cite work and career related reasons.

Q Please look at this card and tell me in which way you think learning could be most useful to you personally?

Q And in which way do you think learning could be second most useful to you?

	Most Useful	Second Most Useful
	%	%
Helping me to achieve what I want to out of life	17	13
Satisfy my personal interest/curiosity	13	12
Improving my job prospects	10	8
Improving my quality of life	10	11
Stretching my brain	10	10
Increasing my self-confidence	7	8
Improving performance in current job	6	4
Increase salary	5	4
Improving my standard of living	5	6

Base: All

NB: Answers shown cited by over four percent

[5] It should be noted that the question wording and possible response categories are different in the 1998 survey.

Young people cite education and job related reasons for learning. A large proportion (47%) say that learning will help them to get a job, 45% that it will help them gain qualifications and 34% that it will help them go on to further education at college or university.

These education and job related reasons for learning are less likely to be given than when the question was asked in 1996. However, the perceived importance of learning for gaining employment is shown by the fact that 95% of young people feel that learning will help them to get a good job. The issue of qualifications is less clear cut - 39% say they only learn things in order to get qualifications whereas 32% disagree with this.

Influences to start learning

The workplace is most likely to influence people to start learning. Thirty-four per cent of adults say that their employer or their work colleagues are most likely to influence them in deciding to start learning.

Friends and relatives are also likely to influence people to start learning (25% and 21% respectively). Friends are most likely to influence people without qualifications, while, young people and the unemployed are most likely to cite the influence of parents and relatives.

Which of the following would influence you most in deciding to start learning?

	%
Employer/through work/work colleagues	34
Friends	25
Parents/relatives	21
Information from local college/institute	17
Your children	17
Information from library	16
Information in local newspapers	15
Information on television	15
Information in national newspapers	11
Information from magazines	11
Careers guidance/careers centre	11

Base: All
NB: Answer cited by over ten percent

Encouragement to learn

The phrase *'Discover the talents within you'* is most likely to encourage the public to learn more. Forty-one per cent of adults selected this phrase. A smaller proportion (32%) chose *'Learn now for a better future'*, although this was particularly popular amongst young people and the unemployed.

Working adults were asked to select a phrase which would encourage them to consider learning something related to their work. The most popular phrase was *'There's more to your job than people realise - get your skills recognised, get qualified'*, selected by 41%.

Phrases highlighting the financial benefits of learning were also felt to be encouraging. *'Learn more, Earn more'* was selected by 36%, and a similar proportion chose *'Learning pays'* (35%).

Barriers to learning

The perceived emphasis placed on obtaining qualifications is a barrier to some peoples' involvement in learning. A large minority (37%) of adults say the stress laid on qualifications has put them off learning. Younger people and those without qualifications are particularly likely to mention this. However, 45% do not feel that the emphasis placed on qualifications has put them off learning.

Barriers to learning for young people include poor teaching (77%), feeling unhappy (74%) and teachers who do not understand how children learn (72%). Older children are generally more likely to feel that each of the factors has negatively affected their learning, but they are especially likely to feel school and teaching related issues have prevented them from learning. There are few differences between boys and girls, except that girls are more likely to have found learning difficult due to feeling unhappy - 78% cf 71%.

Where we learn

Learning in the community

Where we learn most

Adults feel they learn most in the home (57%), at work (41%) and in libraries (16%).

Young people most frequently say they learn new things in class at school (78%), and from watching television (50%). There are differences between the sexes in the perceptions of where they learn most. Girls believe they learn more at school (83% cf 73%), whereas boys are more likely to believe they learn more using computers (38% cf 24%).

Despite general agreement amongst young people that they learn most at school, adults are divided in their views about how school prepared them for learning in their life today. Although 48% agree that school prepared them for learning, a similar proportion (42%) disagree and 10% are undecided.

Adults

In which three of the following places do you think you personally learn most?

	%
In your home	57
At work	43
Libraries	16
College/University	29
On holidays/travelling	22
Museums	13
Adult learning centres	13
At school	11
Pubs/clubs	8
In other people's home	8
Church	6

Base: All

NB: Answer cited by over five percent

Learning at school

Although young people are most likely to say that they learn new things in class at school, only 50% say they enjoy learning at school. This is significantly less than say they enjoy learning overall (79%), however, only a minority (16%) actually find learning at school unenjoyable.

The proportion of children enjoying learning at school has not changed significantly since 1996. Girls are more likely than boys to enjoy school based learning (54% cf 47%) as are children from black and minority ethnic groups (56%).

Fifty-one percent of children also think that learning outside, but within school grounds, is also very important, compared to just 9% who disagree. Boys are more likely than girls to value learning in school grounds (56% cf 46%).

Children were asked which of a range of changes they would most like to see made to their school. The most frequently endorsed change was to arrange more visits to places of interest (57%). Other popular changes were to allow pupils to concentrate on the things they are good at (34%), help students plan their own futures (32%), and have more work experience placements (32%). Giving more homework was the least popular change (4%).

Learning at work

Employer support

A high proportion of adults would prefer to work for an employer who provides time, money and support for training than for one who gives big salary increases, but little opportunity for training (77%).

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Women are more likely than men to cite the importance of training as opposed to salary increases. People with postgraduate or professional qualifications are also more likely to favour training, compared with those who have no qualifications.

Furthermore, the vast majority of adults agree that they would find time to use a work place learning centre or resource room if it would help them to do their job better (69%). However, people without qualifications and those who have not been involved in any form of learning in the past twelve months are less likely to agree.

Encouragement to learn

	Agree	Disagree
	%	%
I would prefer to work for an employer who provides time, money and support for my training than for one who gives big salary increases but little opportunity for training	77	10
Base: All		
I would find time to use a work place learning centre or resources room if it would help me to do my job better	69	16
Base: All who are currently working (581)		

There has been an increase, since 1996, in the proportion of people who feel that employers should support someone who wants to take a course not directly related to their job (57% in 1998 vs. 48% in 1996).

Furthermore, there has been an encouraging increase in the proportion of employers who do support their staff, compared to 1996. Thirty-one per cent of working adults say their employers support them if they want to go on a course to learn new things not directly related to their job, compared to 17% in 1996.

Despite believing that employers should support their staff in learning new things, 37% say that individuals should take responsibility for planning and paying for their training. However, the same proportion (37%) disagrees.

Employer support

	Agree	Disagree
	%	%
Employers should support someone who wants to go on a course to learn new things not directly related to their job	57	27
Base: All		
My employers support me if I want to go on a course to learn new things not directly related to my job	31	47
Base: All who are currently working (581)		
There are enough opportunities for me to learn new things where I work	59	31
Base: All who are currently working (581)		
Individuals should take responsibility for planning and paying for their training	37	37
Base: All		

How we learn

Learning in the community

Preferred style for learning

In terms of methods of learning, adults prefer to do practical things (45%) or study on their own (45%).

Other popular methods of learning for adults include learning with a group of people being given instruction by a teacher or tutor (33%) and exchanging ideas and information with others (32%).

Q **Adults**

In which three of the following ways do you prefer to learn?

	%
Through doing practical things	45
On my own/self-study	45
With a group of people being given information/instructions by a teacher/tutor	33
Exchanging ideas/information with others	32
By practising something on my own	27
By watching demonstrations	24
Thinking for yourself	22

One-to-one study with a tutor	21
Group activities organised/facilitated by a teacher/tutor	20
Other	*
No preference	1
Don't know	1
Base: All	

Conversely, young people are more likely to prefer to learn in groups (52%), although 35% mention doing practical things. Boys prefer learning by doing practical things (39% cf 32%), by using computers (37% cf 21%) and learning alone (24% cf 17%), whereas girls prefer to learn with friends (14% cf 23%).

Although young people prefer learning in groups they believe that *'no-one can make you learn, you have to want to'* (70%). Older children are most likely to feel they have control over their own learning (79% of 15/16 year olds compared to 64% of 11 year olds).

Preferred materials/tools for learning

Despite the popularity of learning by doing practical things, 72% of adults would prefer to use books or written materials for learning new things. Forty-two per cent prefer to attend lectures, compared with 32% who say they would prefer to learn something new by watching television.

Overall, the results are similar to those from the previous survey[6].

Q **And if you wanted to learn something new which of these methods would you prefer to use?**

	%
Books/Written materials	72
Lectures	42
Videos	32
TV programmes	32
CD-ROM/computer software packages	23
Audio-tapes/CDs	14
Internet	11
Other type of learning material	8
Other	2
None of these	1
Don't know	1
Base: All	

[6] Once again, it is important to note that the question wording was different in 1996.

Respondents were also shown a list of activities in order to assess how much they believe they can learn from each. Overall, adults believe that they can learn most from reading books.

The majority of adults believe that you learn a great deal from reading books (63%), compared with 49% who mention using reference books, such as encyclopaedias. A similar proportion feel that you can learn a great deal from watching educational television programmes, such as documentaries or the BBC Learning Zone (46%).

Encouragingly, 67% of people say that they read books and 54% watch educational television at least once a week.

The use of IT

People rate technology relatively low in terms of how useful it is as a learning tool. However, when compared to results for 1996 more people are using IT and are more positive about using technology for learning.

Thirty-three per cent of adults think they can learn a great deal by using the Internet/CD-Roms or by using computers. However, despite an overall increase in the use of technology[7], only 31% of adults use computers on a regular basis, while 16% regularly use the Internet or CD-Roms.

Only a minority would prefer to use technology to learn new things; 23% mention CD-Rom/computer software packages and 11% the Internet. However, this is a marginal increase on 1996. This finding may be related to the fact that 39% of people are unsure or worried about learning new things by using a computer.

There has been a significant increase, since 1996, in the proportion of people who feel that advances in technology are making learning more enjoyable (75% in 1998, compared with 69% in 1996). Similarly, people are more likely to say that technological advances are making learning easier (74% in 1998, compared with 69% in 1996). This may be related to the increase in the use of technology.

Q **The use of IT**

	Agree - 1998	Agree - 1996
	%	%
The advances in technology are making learning more enjoyable	75	69
The advances in technology are making learning easier	74	69
I am unsure/worried about learning new things using computers[8]	39	
Base: All		

[7] The possible response categories used in 1998 differ to those used in 1996, therefore no direct comparisons can be made.

[8] This question was not asked in 1996.

Effective learning at work

Training during paid work hours is most likely to improve performance at work, according to 56% of working adults.

Other methods of learning which are commonly thought to improve performance or skills at work include trial and error (48%) and informal tips or advice from line managers and colleagues (46%).

Taught courses and training are particularly popular amongst those from social class AB households and those who have been involved in three or more episodes of learning in the past twelve months. Conversely, those from social class CDE households prefer watching others.

Q1 In your own experience, which of the following methods of learning, if any, improve your performance/skills at work?

	%
Taught courses/training to improve how you do your job during paid work hours	56
Your own trial and error	48
Informal advice/tips on how to do your job from your line manager/workmates	46
Watching others do the job	39
Teaching yourself things that help you do your job outside paid work hours	27
Taught courses about things you are interested in, but that are not related to your job, during paid work hours	9
Taught courses about things you are interested in, that are not related to your job, outside paid work hours	9
None of these	4
Don't know	1

Base: All who are currently working (581)

Awareness

The Campaign for Learning was launched over 18 months ago, but the level of awareness amongst the public has only marginally increased since the 1996 survey, which was carried out prior to the Campaign's launch. A minority of adults claim to know a great deal or a fair amount about the Campaign (5% in 1998 vs. 2% in 1996). In comparison, 18% of young people say they have heard of the Campaign for Learning.[9]

There has also been a marginal increase in the public's awareness of National Targets for Education and Training (NETTS), Personal Learning Plans, Learning Organisations and Investors in People since 1996.

Recognition of logo

Adults are less likely to recognise the Campaign's Learning for Life logo than secondary school pupils. Forty-five per cent of young people recognise the logo, in contrast to 17% of adults.

Younger pupils are far more likely to identify the logo, as are adults with postgraduate or professional qualifications. Adults without qualifications and those who have not been involved in any form of learning in the past twelve months are less likely to recognise the logo.

Twenty-eight per cent of young people and 37% of adults say the Campaign for Learning logo reminds them of another logo. When asked which logos they were reminded of, a wide variety were mentioned (over 60 different logos). The most frequently mentioned by young people are British Telecom (15%), followed by logos relating to health products and concerns, e.g. Healthy eating (6%), Sanatgon (5%) and sport and leisure centres (5%).

Adults are most likely to be reminded of sports logos (21%) although 15% of adults also mention British Telecom.

[9] Previous research among young people has shown that a proportion of this age group claim awareness of campaigns and their advertising before it has been launched. This propensity and some possible confusion with other activities at local or school level may be responsible for the higher level of awareness among young people. The key concern for the Campaign for Learning is to track awareness and monitor change.

Appendices

Adult sample profile

	Weighted		Unweighted	
	n	%	n	%
Sex				
Male	498	48	474	45
Female	545	52	569	55
Age				
16-24	166	16	140	13
25-34	199	19	189	18
35-44	174	17	201	19
45-54	160	15	185	18
55-59	88	8	79	8
60-64	84	8	79	8
65+	173	17	170	16
Employment status				
Working				
full-time (30+ hours a week)	476	46	430	41
part-time	105	10	121	12
Unemployed				
seeking work	46	4	51	5
not seeking work	29	3	31	3
Not working				
retired	226	22	227	22
housewife/husband	82	8	98	9
student	41	4	41	4
disabled	30	3	33	3
Self-defined ethnicity				
White	990	95	991	95
Black	20	2	19	2
Asian	20	2	20	2
Chinese	2	*	2	*
Any other ethnic group	5	1	5	1
Social class				
AB	234	22	232	22
C1	302	29	299	29
C2	226	22	223	21
DE	281	27	289	28

Young people sample profile

	Weighted		Unweighted	
	n	%	n	%
Total	4,245	100	4,245	100
Age of pupils				
11	441	10	516	12
12	862	20	936	22
13	845	20	987	23
14	845	20	917	22
15/16	1,252	29	889	21
Gender of pupils				
Male	2,152	51	2,132	50
Female	2,093	49	2,113	50
Type of school attended				
LEA/County	2,716	64	2,747	65
Grant-maintained	843	20	819	19
Voluntary aided/controlled/ special agreement	686	16	679	16
Comprehensive	3,448	81	3,413	80
Grammar	314	7	321	8
Secondary Modern	90	2	84	2
Middle	391	9	427	10
Co-educational	3,663	86	3,653	86
Boys only	312	7	299	7
Girls only	270	6	293	7
Ethnic origin				
White	3,729	88	3,742	88
British Black	90	2	87	2
Black Caribbean	35	1	34	1
Black African	26	1	23	1
Black Other	13	*	12	*
British Asian	112	3	112	3
Indian	80	2	76	2
Pakistani	23	1	22	1
Bangladeshi	8	*	7	*
Chinese	16	*	16	*
East African Asian	5	*	5	*
Other	102	2	101	2
Region				
North	264	6	273	6
Yorkshire & Humberside	424	10	412	10
North West	548	13	581	14
West Midlands	476	11	398	9
East Midlands	322	8	363	9
East Anglia	179	4	209	5
South East	1,417	33	1,358	32
South West	371	9	413	10
Wales	243	6	238	6

Statistical reliability

The respondents to the questionnaire are only samples of the total population, so we cannot be certain that the figures obtained are exactly those we would have if everybody had been interviewed (the 'true' values). We can, however, predict the variation between the sample results and the 'true' values from a knowledge of the size of the samples on which the results are based and the number of times that a particular answer is given.

The confidence with which we can make this prediction is usually chosen to be 95% - that is, the chances are 95 in 100 that the 'true' value will fall within a specified range. The table below illustrates the predicted ranges for different sample sizes and percentage results at the '95% confidence interval':

Size of sample on which survey result is based	Approximate sampling tolerances applicable to percentages at or near these levels		
	10% or 90%	30% or 70%	50%
	±	±	±
100 interviews	6	9	10
500 interviews	3	4	4
1,000 interviews	2	2	3

For example, with a sample size of 100 where 30% give a particular answer, the chances are 19 in 20 that the 'true' value (which would have been obtained if the whole population had been interviewed) will fall within the range of ±9 percentage points from the sample result.

When results are compared between separate groups within a sample, different results may be obtained. The difference may be real, or it may occur by chance (because not everyone in the population has been interviewed).

To test if the difference is a real one - if it is 'statistically significant' - we again have to know the size of the samples, the percentage giving a certain answer and the degree of confidence chosen. If we assume '95% confidence interval', the differences between the two sample results must be greater than the values given in the table below:

Size of samples compared	Differences required for significance at or near these percentage levels		
	10% or 90%	30% or 70%	50%
100 and 100	8	11	14
1,000 and 1,000	1	4	4

Social class definitions

A Professionals such as doctors, surgeons, solicitors or dentists; chartered people like architects; fully qualified people with a large degree of responsibility such as senior editors, senior civil servants, town clerks, senior business executives and managers, and high ranking grades of the Services.

B People with very responsible jobs such as university lecturers, hospital matrons, heads of local government departments, middle management in business, qualified scientists, bank managers, police inspectors, and upper grades of the Services.

C1 All others doing non-manual jobs; nurses, technicians, pharmacists, salesmen, publicans, people in clerical positions, police sergeants, and middle ranks of the Services.

C2 Skilled manual workers/craftsmen who have served apprenticeships; foremen, manual workers with special qualifications such as long distance lorry drivers, security officers, police constables, and lower grades of Services.

D Semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers, including labourers and mates of occupations in the C2 grade and people serving apprenticeships; machine minders, farm labourers, bus and railway conductors, laboratory assistants, postmen, door-to-door and van salesmen.

E Those on lowest levels of subsistence including pensioners, casual workers, and others with minimum levels of income.

1 It is important to note that the question wording was different in 1996.

2 It should be noted that the question wording and possible categories are different in the 1998 survey.

3 The question wording differed in 1996.

4 It should be noted that the definition of learning has altered (see page 4). Whilst it is not possible to quantify the effect the use of a specific example such as 'driving lessons' may be responsible for the increase.

5 It should be noted that the question wording and possible response categories are different in the 1998 survey.

6 Once again, it is important to note that the question wording was different in 1996.

7 The possible response categories used in 1998 differ to those used in 1996, therefore no direct comparisons can be made.

8 This question was not asked in 1996.

9 Previous research among young people has shown that a proportion of this age group claim awareness of campaigns and their advertising before it has been launched. This propensity and some possible confusion with other activities at local or school level may be responsible for the higher level of awareness among young people. The key concern for the Campaign for Learning is to track awareness and monitor change.

Everyone agrees that we are moving into a new age in which learning and information will be critically important. To get there we will need a revolution in our attitudes to learning. This report shows that, while there has been progress in some areas, far too many people are still excluded from learning.

Organised into five sections: Current and future learning; Why we learn; Where we learn; How we learn and Awareness of the Campaign for Learning, it offers invaluable data about the state of learning in our society. In addition to providing comparisons with the Campaign's 1996 benchmark survey, it explores the barriers to learning for particular groups as well as the influences that can get people back on the road to learning, whether at work or in the community.

The Campaign for Learning's vision is of an inclusive society in which learning is valued, understood, wanted and widely available. A society in which every individual and every organisation is actively involved in learning.

To achieve this, the Campaign works to create an appetite for learning that can be satisfied successfully throughout the UK.

The Campaign is supported by the following organisations:

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